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A REPUBLICAN ANSWER TO LBJ'S PROGRAM

What is the Republican view of the state of the union, as contrasted to that of President Johnson? What goals and programs will the enlarged Republican membership push in the new Congress?

Answers to these questions were given by Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, Republican Leader of the House, in an interview published January 16 in the Republican Congressional Committee's "Newsletter." The text of that interview:

In his state-of-the-union message, the President called for a 6 per cent surtax for individuals and corporations. What will be the Republican position on this proposal?

Republicans will try to reduce non-military spending to the point where the 6 per cent surtax proposed by the President will be unnecessary.

I agree with Arthur Burns, chief economist in the Eisenhower Administration, that a tax increase would be a "tragic mistake."

The President has yet to present solid evidence that it is necessary, and I believe the burden of proof rests upon the President.

Most top economists I have talked with are deeply concerned that a tax increase might aggravate some of the recessionary tendencies that are already apparent in the economy.

What about LBJ's suggestion for a 20 per cent boost in Social Security benefits?

Republicans will support an increase in Social Security benefits. I might note that more than 100 Republican House members last year introduced legislation to do just that.

But the 20 per cent over-all average increase in benefits suggested by the President would mean a sharp increase in Social Security taxes—taxes which already rose automatically the first of this month .4 per cent to an all-time high of 8.8 per cent, divided equally between employer and employee.

I favor the Republican approach, which would provide an immediate increase in benefits of 8 per cent and, in the future, automatic increases whenever the consumer price index rises 3 per cent or more.

This approach requires no increase in Social Security taxes.

What kind of a bill to share revenue with States and local communities will Republicans propose?

We are studying several alternatives,

But any acceptable plan would have to provide for a scaling-down of some of the federal-grant programs.

We are not going to propose a revenue-sharing plan which is mere icing on the cake. We believe in the principle of revenue-sharing because it would provide the States and localities with the money they need for a variety of programs, but would eliminate the federal controls which automatically accompany the grant programs.

We are seeking a return to federalism—the basic concept of the Founding Fathers.

The President seemed to duck the



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MR. FORD: If the Republicans in Congress can carry out their goals, "we will have laid the foundation for electing a Republican President."

question of an antimissile defense system in his message to Congress. Will Republicans support an antimissile program?

Yes.

The Nike-X is capable of intercepting enemy missiles at great distance from our shores, thereby lessening the danger of fallout over this country, and perhaps eliminating the need for a fallout-shelter system.

We know that the Soviet Union has started to deploy an ABM system around at least two of its major cities. We also know that the Soviets' offensive-missile system has been greatly improved, both numerically and technically—and, finally, that Red China now has a guided-nuclear-missile system. We must move ahead with an antimissile defense system of our own.

What about the Vietnam war? What must be done?

We must continue nonatomic air at-

tacks on significant military targets in North Vietnam, and improve significantly our program for the pacification of the South Vietnam countryside, now largely controlled by the Viet Cong. This program now is under civilian direction, but there are reports that it will be placed under military control unless there is real progress within the next 60 days.

What about the "Great Society" programs already on the books?

Republicans will seek to redirect such programs as the "poverty war," the "demonstration cities" program, rent subsidies, area redevelopment, and some of the education programs.

We believe most of these can be

vastly improved, and we'll suggest constructive ways to do it.

Do you expect the President to send to Congress more of his "Great Society" programs?

He did not so indicate in his state-of-the-union message. If he does, the programs will be mere political gestures—and, at that, will be due to his misreading of the mood of the country as expressed last November.

What are the G.O.P. chances for capturing the White House in 1968?

If we achieve the goals I have just outlined, we will have laid the foundation for electing a Republican President. Our victories last November were won by our achievements in the 89th Congress. Now, with 187 seats in the House as against 140 last year, we have far greater opportunities.

(President Johnson charts his course, page 27; text of the state-of-the-union message, page 104).